

WHAT IS CLAIMED:

1. A retractor comprising:  
a shaft; and  
an inflatable bladder disposed at an end of the shaft,  
wherein the bladder has areas of rigidity interleaved with areas of  
more elasticity.
2. The retractor of claim 1, wherein the inflatable  
bladder does not stretch when fully inflated.
3. The retractor of claim 1, wherein the inflatable  
bladder operates at pressures from 10 mmHg to 1000 mmHg.
4. The retractor of claim 3, wherein the inflatable  
bladder operates at inflation pressures from 100 mmHg to 1000 mmHg.
5. The retractor of claim 1, wherein the shaft is rigid.
6. The retractor of claim 1, wherein the shaft is  
flexible.
7. The retractor of claim 1, further comprising a cannula  
having a passage which receives the shaft to deploy the bladder at a  
target site in tissue.
8. The retractor of claim 1, wherein the inflatable  
bladder has a non-uniform shape.

9. The retractor of claim 1, wherein the inflatable bladder has a shape selected from the group consisting of circular, oval, eccentric, oblong, conical, wedge-shaped, V-shaped, and multiple lobes.

10. The retractor of claim 1, wherein the bladder comprises a wedge-shaped bladder.

11. The retractor of claim 10, wherein the bladder comprises a wedge-shaped bladder having an accordion structure.

12. The retractor of claim 1, wherein the bladder has an accordion structure.

13. The retractor of claim 1, further comprising additional inflatable bladders on the shaft.

14. The retractor of claim 13, wherein the additional inflatable bladders are separately inflatable.